

Employee FRONTLINE

March 2019

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program



Yes, It's Possible to Be Depressed and Not Know It

Mental health providers often see clients with varied concerns and life challenges who may also have undiagnosed depression. Symptoms can last so long that a state of depression become “normal.” Some clients may struggle to recall what not feeling depressed is even like. Words such as cheerful, content, happy and hopeful may feel foreign and out of place in their day to day life. If you can relate to this description, please know you are not alone. Many people are suffering silently and there is help to overcome this state of being, even if it has lasted a long time. The [EAP](#) works with people regularly to assess more deeply the origins of depression and helps clients develop a realistic plan to move beyond it. Help is available. Please contact us anytime to learn more.

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The Green Workspace

Employers today are becoming more aware of the mental and health benefits to their workforce by examining the “built” environment. How we work, where we work, and the conditions that surround us in the workplace all impact our wellbeing. Many organizations are seeing the importance that *biophilia* plays in today's world of work. Biophilic design is an approach to architecture that seeks to connect building occupants more closely to nature.

Researchers indicate that even having a plant or two on a desk can make for a healthier workspace and even likely reduces stress. This is referred to as “nature contact,” which means “exposure to the outdoors or outdoor-like elements in a place where you live, work, or play.” Examples include taking a walk outside, having an office with a window, or enjoying green spaces.

In Japan, this concept is called *Forest Bathing*, or “the medicine of simply being in the forest.” We are so fortunate in Washington State to live close to abundant forest and green spaces. Take advantage of the nature that surrounds us by taking a walk every day, putting plants around your workspace, and taking time regularly to be outdoors. Nature really is the best natural medicine money can buy.

For more information on biofilia and the green workplace from one of the world's leading experts, see [Jeanine Benyus' Biomimicry in Action](#). Additionally, the renowned film maker [Louis Schwartzberg](#) has captured [nature in film](#) so eloquently. And finally, author and architect on the built environment [Leigh Stringer](#) wrote about these important concepts in her book [The Green Workplace](#).



Can Meditation and Exercise Fend Off Flu?

Studies show that stress, life crises, and negative emotional states increase the risk of acute respiratory infections like colds, flu, and similar conditions. Could stress reduction techniques such as mindfulness, meditation, and physical exercise have a preventive effect? The U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) decided to find out. Nearly 400 study participants completed a stress management training program, and the results were positive. Participants did experience fewer flu, colds, and respiratory infections. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) say the best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu shot—it's reportedly 40 to 60 percent effective. But keeping your immune system healthy by better managing stress is no doubt a good idea. With easy and regular habits of meditation and exercise you can reduce stress while calming the mind and the body. An ounce of prevention goes a long way. For more on this study, go to www.med.wisc.edu.

Do You Regularly Skip Breakfast? You May Want to Re-think That Decision



You may have heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Our bodies need sufficient energy to begin the day and you likely won't perform at your best if you skip it. What's more concerning though is that a review of key studies focusing on skipping breakfast confirmed something more menacing—increased risk of diabetes. Some research shows an increase in heart disease for those who bypass breakfast. With type 2 diabetes on the increase, it's best to avoid skipping breakfast. Why not experiment with new and healthier breakfast options? Choosing healthy foods to start your day will not only build up your energy levels but aid in helping to avoid chronic disease. If you find yourself with no time to fix a morning meal, try making grab-and-go meals to store in your freezer and reheat quickly, like breakfast burritos with veggies or baked oatmeal bars with fruit, as opposed to opting for processed foods. It will only take a half hour of time on the weekend and will keep you fueled up for the month.

Moving On From an Abusive Relationship

It took a long time—but you did it. You left a relationship that was unhealthy or abusive. Healing takes time—and everyone's experience is different, so be patient in this journey. Start by visiting a domestic violence advocate at your local [DV Program](#) or an [EAP](#) counselor for an assessment or some short-term counseling/coaching on the healing process. Beyond talking about your experiences, it might help you to focus as well on the following goals for yourself, each of which will help repair, replenish, and reestablish a healthier you. 1. Examine your sense of self-efficacy, in other words, your beliefs about your abilities. Self-efficacy can suffer in abusive relationships, which leads to doubting your ability to succeed in your life. 2. Discover the life skill of "living in the moment." This is retraining how you think in order to help you move away from fearing the future. 3. Practice paying attention to personal needs—whether diet, exercise, or stress management—and begin affirming rather than postponing these needs. Remember, self-nurturing aids self-healing. 4. Start catching negative self-talk and reversing it into positive affirmations and reassurance. Some negative self-talk may be linked with guilt at failing in relationships. Take your positivity shears and nip these in the bud. 5. Many people healing from trauma find power in journaling. Give it a test to see whether it works for you. Wellness is a journey, and life skills like the ones above are the tools for making the trip.